From: Andy Lawrence
To: Microsoft ATR
Date: 1/23/02 2:11pm
Subject: Microsoft Settlement

Hello,

Please rethink your settlement with MS... Because of their prevalence in the market, they can force people to use only MS products for communication. Because they make the best products for using a fileformat (for instance a Microsoft Word document) which, while owned by them, is now a defacto standard for a lot of people. The problem is that Microsoft does NOT publish instructions on how to read those documents programatically, and therefore no one can complete effectively to make a competitive product.

Even in cases where they do use an freely available standard in their products, they tamper with the implementation of that standard in their products so that, once again, only their products will work with it (see Kerberos auth in Win2k, and the use of LDAP in their ActiveDirectory product). It is my understanding that they are going to now use XML (another freely available standard) in future office products for their fileformats, but that those formats will once again be modified slightly so that nothing but MS products can read/write them. There is nothing "innovative" about the results of this bending, other than as a way to lock in customers.

In short -- asking for money from them (much less the idea of them *donating* software -- which is free for them to duplicate -- to schools) isnt going to change any behaviors. Requiring use of published standards (as written) and allowing one and all (NOT just commercial entities) to inter operate with their products fairly is the only way for a bahavior change and a healthier computing industry.

Thanks.

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